

Loud and Clear

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Summary: Pre-HTTYD2. Astrid has an easier time saying things with her hands than her words. Hiccup's pretty good at translating.

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This was originally posted on AO3 after the first real trailer for the second movie hit, waaaaay back in December 2013. Hopefully it's still enjoyable despite its (slight) age. :)

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><p>Loud and Clear

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><p>"What, what, what are you doing back there?"<p>

Hiccup tried to turnâ€"he set his hand on the bedpost and his bare shoulder tensed as he made to push off itâ€"but Astrid tugged hard on the hank of hair in her left hand, and he grunted.

"What's it feel like?"

"Torture," he said. He was straining to look from the corner of his eye; she saw the sweep of eyelash right there at the edge. "Are you braiding my hair?"

"Hm," said Astrid. She passed the left outside hank to the center and

then the right outside. "Am I? I don't know. I must be doing something since you keep squirming."

"Why are you braiding my hair?"

She shrugged and kept working. The bed was warm under all the furs, and her leg, slung over his, was cooling where it stuck out off the edge of the bed. The chill of late autumn nipped at her toes. Hiccup said he'd never understood why it was Astrid loved the cold so much, but she figured he was the weird one. If Berk was going to be so cold all the time, then it made sense that the people who lived on Berk would enjoy the frost. He was the one who insisted on stoking the fire in the middle of the night. He'd done that and then come running back to bed, his teeth chattering and his mouth going a mile a minute.

"It's not like you could make me look any better than I already look. I meanâ€" He gestured grandly from head to toe. "Just look at all this."

His hair was soft on her fingers, fine and slick, unlike Astrid's thick, coarse hair. She ran her little finger up the underside of what she'd braided so far, savoring the feel of his hair. When she turned the braid just the right way, the red in it showed like copper.

"I've already seen it," she said.

"Yeah, but not like this." He flexed, making a joke of himself again. She wished he wouldn't do that. If anyone was going to make fun of Hiccup, then it should be Astrid, not Hiccup.

She tugged on his hair again; he'd pulled away from her.

"Stop moving."

Hiccup grumbled and leaned back against her shoulder, whereâ€"a moment ago, before he'd started talkingâ€"she'd thought he was dozing, nearly asleep. As she neared the end of the little braidâ€"methodically wrapping the center with each passâ€"he fell quiet again. His shoulder rose with his breathing, uneven, too staggered for him to be dozing now. Freckles dotted the lean expanse of his upper back, his shoulder too. Pinching the end of the braid between her thumb and first finger, she dragged one of the furs higher up to cover his exposed shoulder.

He made a little humming noise in his mouth. Astrid bit her lip, trying not to smile; thenâ€"who would see her do it? The dragons were sleeping by the low-burning fire, Stormfly's head propped on Toothless' back, and they wouldn't care. She let the smile out.

Astrid twisted the braid around her finger and slipped the tail through the loop she'd made. She pulled the knot tight and Hiccup made another grumbling sound.

"All done," she said.

He rubbed the back of his head against her shoulder. The unruly ends of his hair tickled her throat.

"Thanks. If anyone laughs at me, I'll know who to thank."

"If anyone laughs at you," Astrid said, "I'll break their faces open."

Hiccup tipped his head back. He squinted through the mess of his bangs at her.

"You laugh at me," he said.

She fluffed his bangs with her fingertips. "Yeah," she said, "but I'm the only one who's allowed to."

"Who said that? When was that decided? When did you think I should have a say in the subject, that's what I want to know, that's what I'm curious about"

Once he got wound up, stopping him was a tricky thing. Luckily Astrid had mastered that trick long ago. Winding the braid around her thumb, she jerked back so he winced and his throat, arching, flashed. His hair brushed her breasts, itching at them. Cupping his head with her free hand, Astrid bent and kissed the old scar on his chin. His breath caught. She smiled again.

His throat, still turned up, worked; he swallowed. His tongue passed over his lips.

"Uh, not that I want to question your aim," said Hiccup. "But I'm pretty sure you missed."

"I never miss," Astrid said.

The fire was down to the last log, chewing on what was left of it. In the growing shadows, his pale eyes were dark like the forest.

"No, see, normally, I'd agree with you," he said. "But I have to say, my lips, they're kind of cold"

"That so," said Astrid. "Well, I'll take care of that."

His eyelids fluttered. His lower lip puckered, just slightly, in anticipation or invitation. Astrid toyed with the braid looped around her thumb and drew her leg up to his waist. Hiccup sucked in a breath. His shoulders quivered. She let the braid go; she cradled his cheek; she waited for him to turn to face her. Then she pushed up and threw the furs back.

"Hey"what"

He reached for her as she slithered out of and off the bed. His fingertips just swept her thigh, and then he collapsed back on the bed.

"Astrid"I can't believe you just did that, that was so
mean"

"I thought you were cold."

Naked, she fed fresh wood to the caged fire from the pile kept back

by the wall.

"I didn't mean you had to stoke the fire," he said. "Or not right now, anyway."

"Hey, I'm saving you from having to get up again later."

"Later won't matter, because I'll be asleep thenâ€"

"So I won't have to get up again later," Astrid said. She patted Stormfly's nose in passing. Stormfly opened one eye halfway to peek at her, and Astrid smiled at her. "Keeping Toothless warm?"

Stormfly nattered in her throat and then her eye rolled up and the lid came down again, and she wiggled her head. Under her, Toothless grumbled.

"Astrid," said Hiccup plaintively, "come onâ€"

"Shove over," Astrid told him. Sliding back under the furs, she pushed him back to the wall.

"I'm freezing," he complained. "Why are your hands so cold? I'm gonna freeze to death next to you."

Astrid rubbed her cold hands all up and down his chest as he fussed. He tried to get his hands up between them, but she knocked his arm aside easily. His arms were lean like the rest of himâ€"he was never going to be huge like his fatherâ€"but his chest was warm against her cheek. She locked her arms and legs around him. His shortened left leg shifted, his knee now at the inside of her thigh. Then she had him thoroughly pinned.

"Oh," he said, "what's happening?"

"You're warm," Astrid said. She wiggled warningly at him. "If you move, I'll tie you back down."

"Who's moving?" he asked. "I'm not moving. I'm staying right here. This is nice. I like this. Thank you. Thank you for sharing this with me."

"Stop talking."

"I'm not talking," he protested.

Astrid shut him up. She tried, anyway. Maybe it was a good thing she didn't mind it so much when Hiccup got wound up. He never seemed to mind when she tried to shut him up.

"That's better," she murmured into his mouth.

He mumbled, "I still say I wasn't talking," and kissed her back, his lips soft and insistent.

She curled her fingers in his hair, knotting her hands in that dark tangle. The braid stuck out at an odd angle, and she thought it looked good like that. Something for her to grab on to.

"You're still talking," she said.

"Am not."

"Shut up," Astrid said, and she pushed him down.

The fire crackled. Outside the wind snarled, knocking against their cabin. She wasn't worried about it. Berk built their cabins tough. She was more concerned with how Hiccup laughed when she trickled her fingers down his stomach. His knee brushed her thigh. His whole leg straightened beneath her; she knew from experience that his toes were spreading, as if he had to draw his every part out as taut as possible to survive her palm between his legs.

"It's really hard to be quiet when you do that," he said, his voice cracking. She liked that she could still make him do that.

"Maybe if you tried harder," she suggested.

"I'm trying r-e-a-l-l-y hard," Hiccup said. His teeth hooked in his lower lip. "You have no idea how hard I'm trying to be quiet."

"Hm," said Astrid. She stroked her fingers up the underside of his cock, and he gasped. "I have an idea."

"That was," he said. "That was not funny. That was really bad."

She did it again, and Hiccup's whole face pinched: his eyes squeezed shut; she could see them cross under his eyelids. He was warm and tight under her, his shoulders freckled, his chest freckled, and she didn't know how since it wasn't like he ran around naked under the sun all the time.

"I don't know," she said. "You like it. Do you want me to stop?"

"No," said Hiccup, high-pitched. "You can keep doing that. If you want to do that. You don't have to do that if you don't want to but, uh, I'm really, really okay withâ€"that."

"Good." She kissed his nose, the little wrinkle between his eyebrows. "'Cause I want to do that. But if you're not sureâ€"|"

"_Astrid_," he said, and she trapped his tongue with her mouth.

Her heart was tripping in her chest. His hand smoothed over her shoulder, and he gasped into her kisses as if she were sucking the breath from him. The vulnerability of him under her, how he flushed beneath his freckles, the tiny squeak still clinging to his voice: the enormity of her own emotion strained her ribs. Astrid licked the corner of his mouthâ€"she twisted her hand up his cock and Hiccup moaned her name againâ€"and she swallowed the thing she still didn't know how to say.

When he came, he came hotly on her thigh, and he said her name again. He said, "Astrid!" and "Astridâ€"_gods_â€"Iâ€"Astrid," helplessly. She swallowed the rest of what he meant to say, too. Her chest ached, her heart a rabbit.

His lips were wet. He licked them again anyway.

"Astrid!" He reached for her. "You should've let me!"

She caught his hand. Bringing it up, she kissed the inside of his wrist. The knobs on either side of his wrist were chapped, the skin dried by the wind.

"Don't worry about it." She kissed the back of his wrist, too, and then his thumb. "You'll just have to owe me one."

His legs moved. He cupped her shoulder, his fingers warm around the joint.

"I could pay you back now."

"Or," she said, kissing him lingeringly, "you could practice first."

"Practice with what?"

She licked the backs of his teeth. His hair was fine on her fingers, soft as cloud-stuff breaking against her rough palm.

"Your tongue."

Hiccup laughed, that half-incredulous, full-wondering laugh that came up through his nose, and said, "Oh, wow. That's kind of a lot to take in."

"You can handle it," Astrid said. She poked his ribs and he laughed again. "Big, tough Viking like you."

"Big and tough," he said, "yeah, that's me. Big and tough. Everybody better watch out 'cause here comes Hiccup." He fake-growled theatrically and Astrid had to bite the inside of her cheek.

Over by the fire, Toothless grumbled again and thumped his tail on the floor.

"Thanks for the support," Hiccup called across the room.

"Hey, stop bringing your dragon into this."

"I thought you already did," said Hiccup, and Astrid—"she didn't mean to laugh, but then she was laughing anyway, and Hiccup, cradling her arms, said, "Astrid—"you have to remember to breathe—" and she said, "Why are you so—" "

"Perfect?" he suggested. "Handsome? Uh, devastatingly intelligent?"

"So Hiccup?" she said when she could breathe again. And maybe that was enough to say, after all, because Hiccup's eyes crinkled and his mouth curled and his eyelashes came shyly down, as if he were the one tongue-tied and not Astrid.

"I don't know," he said. "I've asked my dad but—" "

"Don't bring him into this either," said Astrid. She pinched Hiccup's nose.

"Okay," he said. "Leaving my dad out of this. That's a good idea. I'll remember that one." His hand stroked down her spine, his fingers brushing the beginning swell of her backside. "About me owing you oneâ€|"

"Practice run," she said.

"Yeah, practice run." He circled the small of her back with his thumb. Up through his eyelashes, thin and dark, he looked at her. "Don't want to mess up when it's for real."

She could have said something in reply to that. She could have said a lot of things. What, though, she didn't know. Her chest was too sore for any of it. So instead Astrid bent to kiss him again, and Hiccupâ€his face turning up to her as if she was something wonderful, and that breathless sort of smile still on his lipsâ€Well, she figured he got the message.

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